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Extract from Report

on

AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENT POSSIBILITIES IN CANADA

Submitted to

The Dominion Advisory Committee on Reconstruction

by

Professor W. Burton Hurd

McMaster University



Hamilton, Canada

September 21, 1944

The enclosed document comprises the preface, introduction, summary and conclusions of the report prepared by the author at the request of the Dominion Advisory Committee on Reconstruction. It is being made available in mimeographed form to interested parties on request. The complete text of the report is not available for distribution at present.

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The present study is the sequel to a previous report which reviewed Canada's past and current population trends and their relation to the agricultural development of the Dominion. It attempts to assemble in convenient form available research findings and the specialized knowledge and judgment of experts in all sections of the country on available agricultural lands and their settlement possibilities. Like the preceding report, it was prepared under a directive from the Dominion Advisory Committee on Reconstruction. Dr. Leonard C. Marsh and Dr. J. F. Booth collaborated both in planning and in carrying out the study.

The several provinces were requested to assemble such information as was already available or could be conveniently obtained on the settlement areas within their boundaries, and on their physical and economic possibilities. The Dominion Department of Agriculture undertook to provide copies of all materials at their disposal as did other Federal agencies including the Census Division of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, the Soldier Settlement Board, and the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration. The Departments of Agriculture and Colonization of the Canadian National and the Canadian Pacific Railways contributed important documentary materials and valuable criticism and advice. Dr. Marsh interviewed officials in the Quebec and the three Maritime Provinces. The writer consulted personally with government, university and other authorities in Ontario and the four Western Provinces. Personal consultation was supplemented by correspondence - in some cases voluminous - with experts in all parts of the Dominion.

On the basis of the materials assembled, draft chapters were prepared on each of the nine provinces and submitted to appropriate provincial authorities for correction and criticism, and were revised in the light of the comments and suggestions received. As a result eight of the ensuing chapters may be said to carry the approval of senior departmental officials in the respective provinces, viz. the chapters on Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. Authorities in the Province of Quebec withheld comment on the chapter dealing with that province.

For the introductory and concluding chapters on the Prairie Provinces and for the summary and conclusions, the writer takes sole responsibility save in so far as dependence is placed on authorities to which reference is made in the footnotes. The order in which the chapters appear follows that in which they were written. This order was preserved because of the editorial convenience in referring back to sources mentioned and conclusions reached in the earlier chapters.

Where factual material was lacking, an attempt was made to secure expert opinion. In matters of opinion, experts sometimes differed; where the matter was important and the difference great, it was noted in the text.

The study revealed that while much has been added during the past few years to our knowledge of agricultural settlement possibilities in certain sections of the Dominion, in other sections authoritative factual information is still very deficient. The findings in the portions of the report dealing with these latter sections of the country must be regarded not only as tentative but liable to modification if and when more exact information becomes available. Indeed, for no portion of the Dominion is our knowledge by any means complete, so that no section of the report may be considered as final.

Nevertheless from the materials available it has been possible to trace in broad outline, a picture of agricultural settlement possibilities across Canada which, inspite of its inadequacies, may be of some service in formulating public policy for the post-war period. Such, at least, is the hope of the author.

Limitations of space prevent individual acknowledgements to the scores of persons whose assistance has made possible the preparation of this report. Some indication of the extent of that assistance is given in the footnotes. To the many whose names are not specifically mentioned the author takes this opportunity of expressing his sincere appreciations.

For Canada, the subjects of population growth, agricultural developments, land settlement and immigration are inextricably mingled. This has been emphatically true in the past, but the interrelationships in a postwar context are even more difficult to separate and analyse. Yet this analysis must be undertaken, and factual measurement must be sought at every point where it is appropriate and attainable if an intelligent postwar policy is to be formulated. It must be a policy which not only Canadians can understand, but which can be presented clearly in international discussion. For it is all too commonly assumed that the Dominion is a land of great open spaces, with unnumbered acres of potential farm land and opportunities for settlement. The truth is that not only Canada's future population trends, but its postwar measures in the immediate transition period must be conceived in terms of its urban and industrial population, the development of its nonagricultural natural resources, not merely as a farm settlement or pioneer problem. This is not a mere manifestation of economic nationalism, or a quest for industrialization for the sake of industrialization, but a perspective derived from any assessment which takes account of the full range of facts.

The capacity of Canada to absorb and retain new population has been much more limited in the past than was once supposed. Only a portion of the new immigrants who have come to Canada have remained within its borders. It is even possible that its present population might have been much the same if it had been recruited principally from natural increase (protected by better health measures) rather than the immigration stream. That the natural resources of Canada are great, say by Western European standards, is undeniable; but it is questionable whether the resources in unoccupied, fertile and easily accessible agricultural land are not seriously restricted. Farms which give a reasonable promise of successful agriculture must be carefully enumerated, even if the needs of men demobilized from the armed services are to be fully and competently met. Over and above all this, two enduring trends must be recognized, which have applied not only to Canada but to all parts of the world developed by modern economic technology. The productivity of agriculture is immensely greater than it was fifty years or a century ago. The war period has added a remarkable demonstration of this, in bringing forth a greatly enlarged volume and variety of farm products in spite of a labour force seriously depleted below its pre-war level. The second is the large and increasing proportion of the gainfully-occupied population devoted to industrial and service activities. This may be, indeed ought to be, consistent with economic progress and improving standards of living, though it has not always been so. It is none the less one of the essential concomitants of full employment policy, if "full employment" is to mean the varied employment of twentieth century civilization and not the full employment of a peasant economy.

Yet beyond argument, a sound and substantial agricultural population is vital for a stable economy based on Canadian resources. Under what conditions can it be maintained? The present study, and the preceding one, which is complementary to it, has concerned itself only with certain fundamental factors in the picture. In a separate report, Professor Hurd has brought together an authoritative analysis of (a) past population trends, (b) movements in the agricultural population, and (c) the main factors which have conditioned these changes. The present study proceeds further in subjecting to close scrutiny all information relating to (a) the amount and condition of land suitable or potentially available for cultivation, and (b) the physical factors most directly conditioning its usability. Some of these measurements are still incomplete, and perhaps not freed from controversy; but this survey has endeavoured to take account of all available information which has any claim to authority.

Since the results may seem to be too restrictive, the reminder is necessary that physical and economic capacity are not necessarily coterminous. The difference may exist in both directions. In the most remote areas where local markets are negligible and costs of transportation to shipment points prohibitive, the finest soil can be of little value. On the other hand, in the older and more accessible areas, there is always the possibility that the advance of all the science which can be applied to agriculture may radically transform the productivity of the farm. It is not necessary to make extravagant claims, but it would be an omission to take no account at all of the

technical dimensions of modernized agriculture. In order that the present report may not be misunderstood, brief mention should be made of the principal factors, other than the basic existence and fertility of the soil, on which the future of agricultural settlement depends.

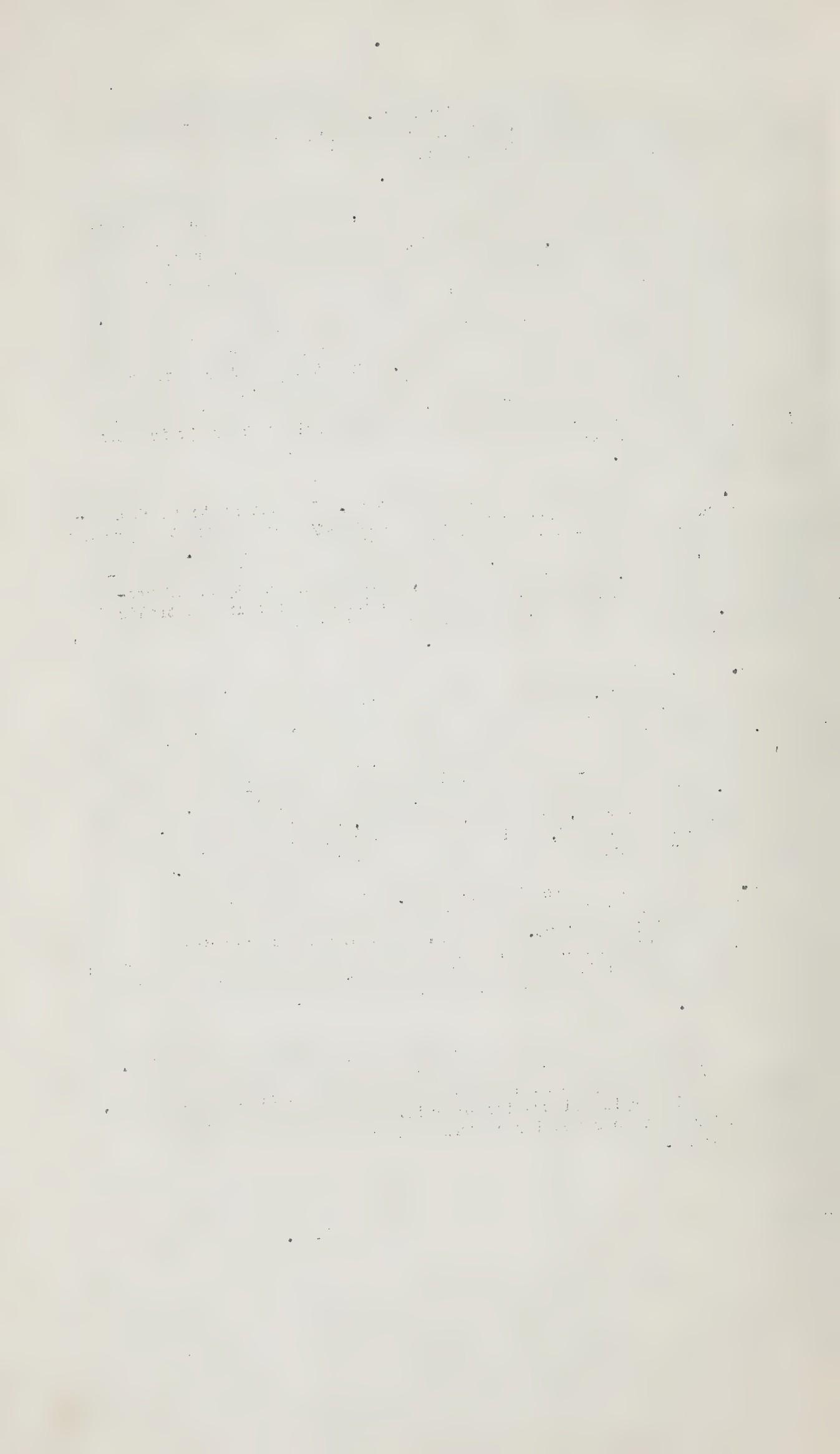
1. Agricultural production techniques. How far are changes in the existing modes of ownership and operation, relative proportions of commercial and subsistence farming, etc. assumed? A farm is one thing if it is a small family unit worked with a minimum of machinery and livestock; it may be quite another operated on a very large scale, on some basis of industrial or collective organization with extensive mechanical and scientific equipment. It is true that whether in the aggregate this employs more or less people than the small farms which might make up the same area of land depends upon how a "farm worker" is defined in the future. But at least this makes clear how important it is to define what kind of farms are being assumed when estimates are made of settlement capacity. It is part of this consideration that, at the other extreme, on subsistence or sub-marginal farms (which may retain a sizeable population) economic or efficiency determinants may be accorded little weight.

2. The industrialization of agriculture. The extent to which agricultural products may be the raw materials of industry rather than food products alone is one of the biggest variables in the agricultural equation. Promising lesser strides, but still important, are developments like improved and decentralized warehouses, quick refrigeration, dehydration and types of processing which can be brought nearer to the farm instead of being centralized in factories. These promise more stability and better revenue for agriculture, besides greater variety of farm production.

3. Social investment in agricultural and rural areas. Capital investment in agriculture, looked at from the national point of view, and in terms of postwar needs is no longer confined to roads, railways, and elevators. The objective of making agricultural areas better places in which to live, and of creating new opportunities there, has to be met by the newer forms of social investment - in housing, integrated conservation projects on the TVA model, power and irrigation projects, rural electrification, community institutions such as schools, libraries, hospitals, recreation centres. The "decentralization of industry", if it is influenced by factors such as those mentioned above may contribute to and help to stabilize the new trend.

4. The extent and growth of markets. This is universally agreed on as a fundamental but it is not always fully understood that it depends on certain other positive factors. Notably, these include industrial and urban growth, as the biggest internal source of demand for produce of the farm; and international collaboration in restoring the war-devastated parts of the globe and permitting them to achieve economic rehabilitation and the power to pay for imports.

These are the tangibles in the complete estimate of the situation. Whether or not they add up to a clear possibility of maintaining the agricultural population at its present level or permitting a substantial increase, is a matter on which varying views will prevail. The important point is that the present report does not ignore them, but attempts no specific or financial assessment.



The Prairie Provinces

(1) In the three Prairie Provinces there probably now remain not over 12,500,000 acres of reasonably accessible, arable unoccupied land on the fringe of settlement, plus, scattered over the region as a whole, perhaps a million acres of idle or abandoned acreage suitable for resettlement. There also exists considerable occupied acreage that is by no means fully utilized as judged by generally prevailing standards of land utilization, but for reasons set forth in Chapter V it is questionable whether such land should be included in estimates of acreage available for the extension of settlement.

(2) On the basis of the mean size of farm obtaining in the districts in which available unoccupied and abandoned lands are located, room might be found on presently unused arable lands for as many as 40,000 farm families. Further, if it were found practicable to complete all irrigation projects proposed by P.F.R.A. engineers for the Prairie Region (which is decidedly questionable) provision would be made for an additional net increase of perhaps 13,300 farm units. Unused arable lands and possible irrigation developments combined thus might provide lands adequate for the establishment of some 53,300 new settlers and their families. The above estimates assume the continued prevalence of commercial (as distinguished from subsistence) farming, and the absence of any radical change in current practices of land utilization except as occasioned by the extension of irrigation.

(3) As an offset to the above figures, account should be taken of some thousands of farm operators at present on sub-marginal holdings in the Prairie Provinces. Their number is not large in Manitoba, but in Saskatchewan, responsible estimates place the figure in the neighbourhood of 18,000, of whom about half (or 9,000) should be moved to unused lands elsewhere. This number would be about adequate to settle the remaining 3,000,000 acres of usable land in the Grey Wooded Soil Zone on the northern fringe of that province. Similar figures are not available for Alberta, but informed opinion places the total very much lower than that in Saskatchewan. The figure may be around 3,000. The provinces naturally consider that resident farmers on sub-marginal holdings have a preferred claim on lands available for new settlement within the provincial boundaries.

(4) If one adds to the possible demand from the above source, that of demobilized members of the armed services, returning industrial workers and younger sons of present farm operators in the respective provinces, and includes with the unused land and lands capable of irrigation, farm acreages that may become available through the retirement of present farm operators because of advancing age, it would appear that the prospective demand for farm holdings in the post-war years about offsets the prospective supply in the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Only in the province of Alberta is there reasonable assurance of any significant opportunity for the extension of agricultural settlement through extra-provincial immigration.

(5) Were one to relate the remaining unused and irrigable acreage to the rate of new settlement in the decade following the last war, one might conclude that the settlement of the Prairie Region could be completed in a matter of five or six years after the close of the present hostilities. Such is not likely to be the case. In the first place, the remaining unused lands are for the most part bush covered and their settlement will be more costly and less rapid than that of the open prairies. Moreover, the rate at which new areas will be occupied will be tempered by governmental insistence on future settlement being planned, directed and supervised. Such a policy would impose severe limitations on the number of new settlers that could be placed each year. In the second place, the development of large irrigation projects is a long-term proposition and in most cases some time will be required before their feasibility is even established. In addition, all such projects involve heavy, non-recoverable government expenditures, the timing of which, if they are incurred, will probably be determined by considerations other than the desire to speed up agricultural settlement (e.g., the need for public works to maintain full employment). In the third place, the heavy relief expenditures of the nineteen thirties have created a strong prejudice in official circles against settlement under conditions where the margin of income over expenditures is not sufficiently large to insure the prospective settler against becoming a future public charge. Expressed in terms of

practical policy, this attitude means detailed soil and other surveys before opening each new region for settlement, and the adjustment of the tempo of settlement generally, not only to the availability of suitable settlers but to the expansion of markets adequate to absorb the surplus product.

(6) The number of farm holdings could also be increased through the more intensive utilization of lands in the Black Park Zone (and perhaps to some extent in the Grey Wooded Soil Zone) where precipitation is adequate for livestock and dairy farming without irrigation. To bring about such a change, however, greatly expanded markets for such products would need to be not only assured, but sufficiently profitable to offset the forces favouring large-scale cereal production and induce a switch-over to animal products as the principal source of cash income. In view of the number of unpredictable factors in the situation, no judgment is possible as to the likelihood of such a development nor as to the possible extent of its effect, if it were to occur, on the density of agricultural settlement in the regions affected. The chances are that any increase in the density of settlement through this cause would be gradual.

(7) Just as the maintenance of existing agricultural settlement in the Prairie Provinces is dependent on the securing of markets comparable in size to those in the decade following the last World War, so the increase of agricultural settlement in this region, whether through the extension of occupied acreage or the more intensive use of lands already under cultivation, would seem to depend on the expansion of markets in the years following the present war.

(8) While research findings have demonstrated that many agricultural raw and waste materials originating in this region might be put to industrial uses, the economic feasibility of any large-scale utilization of such materials in the face of other competitively available sources of supply, has not been proven. Indeed, the evidence to date is such as to discourage the expectation of any major impetus to agricultural settlement through this cause in the near future. The same applies generally to the industrial demand for the non-agricultural resources of the region. This picture, of course, may change over night, but until it does, increased settlement will continue, as in the past, to depend largely on the expansion of export markets.

British Columbia

(1) In Central British Columbia available evidence suggests that there may be as much as 1,780,000 acres of usable arable land which, after deducting occupied acreage, would provide farm holdings with a quarter-section of arable land for about 11,000 new settlers. A rough estimate places the potential area suitable for settlement in the Peace River Block at 1,260,000 acres which, on the basis of a half-section farm unit, would accommodate some 3,900 farm families or a net addition of 2,400 to 2,500 beyond those already there. If as much as three-quarters of the abandoned or idle acreage in the province is suitable for resettlement, another 130,000 acres should be added to the above figures and some 1,150-odd possible new settlers. Available acreage in the Fraser Valley, the South Central Interior, Vancouver Island and in the other scattered sections of the province bring the total apparent, unused, arable land in the province as a whole to something in the neighbourhood of 2,500,000 acres, which might be expected eventually to provide locations for from 15,000 to 20,000 new settlers. It is impossible to be more explicit because of the paucity of reliable information concerning many sections of the province.

(2) If in addition, account is taken of occupied farms that may become available because of the advancing age of present operators, it would appear that the potential supply of arable lands in British Columbia is materially in excess of the prospective post-war demand on the part of residents of that province. Physical provision might be made for several thousand agricultural immigrant settlers.

(3) It must not be assumed, however, that the settlement of these lands will be speedily effected. The official attitude in British Columbia is similar to that in the Prairie Provinces, as set forth in the preceding section, and the physical problems and costs involved are even greater than in the Grey Wooded Soils of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Moreover, the expansion

of mixed farming in Central British Columbia (where a large part of the available acreage is located) will continue to be adversely affected by the presence of low cost surplus-producing areas in the adjacent Prairie Region. The British Columbia farmer must meet this competition if he is to secure a larger share of the local market for livestock and livestock products. There is no present expectation that the region can successfully produce such products for export.

(4) The possibility of developing a type of forestry where those engaged would have small arable acreages to supply their domestic requirements is being investigated, and if some satisfactory plan is devised, considerable numbers of new settlers might be located in the forest areas as part-time agriculturalists.

(5) With regard to local markets, there are reasons to expect that these will gradually increase with the development of industries utilizing both agricultural and non-agricultural raw materials. Some of the prospective industrial development will be designed to meet local demands, e.g., the new flax fibre industry; but much of it will depend on the existence of favourable export markets. This is true of many of the proposals for expansion in the food processing and pharmaceutical fields and in industries utilizing the forest and mineral resources of the province. Indeed, through the production of specialty crops, agriculture itself is becoming directly and increasingly dependent on extra-provincial demand. While it is probably true that in British Columbia there is not as close and direct a connection between agricultural settlement and export markets for agricultural products as in the Prairie Region, the indirect connection through the mineral, forestry and fishing industries is a factor of major importance.

Ontario

(1) In Ontario, opportunities for the extension of settlement are confined almost exclusively to the Northern part of the province. Preliminary surveys suggest that in the whole of this area there is a total of about 1,700,000 acres of A grade land (1) and 2,750,000 acres of B grade land suitable for full-time agriculture, which on the basis of 160 acres of arable land per farm, would provide farmsteads for some 28,000 operators. In 1941, there were something over 12,000 occupied farms in this region, and were provision made to move such of the present settlers as are on low to better grade lands, it would appear that suitable land may be available to accommodate as many as 16,000 additional purely agricultural settlers in this region. The weight of evidence supports the view that the remaining C grade land (about 6,000,000 acres) should be kept in forest and operated with agriculture as a part-time subsidiary provided some workable and stable combination can be found; and that the balance of the low grade land (perhaps 10,000,000 acres) be devoted exclusively to forestry.

(2) If one adds to the unused lands available in Northern Ontario say half of the idle or abandoned lands in Southern Ontario and the farms that will become available through the normal ageing of present farm operators, it would appear that, like Alberta and British Columbia, the province of Ontario has arable lands considerably in excess of the prospective demand of her own population for farm holdings during the post-war years. The excess acreage may well be adequate to accommodate 10,000 to 15,000 agricultural settlers from outside the province -- perhaps more.

(3) Yet there are several reasons why the settlement of these lands may not be as rapid as one might hope. As in the Western provinces, official opinion is that future settlement should be planned and supervised. Past settlement procedures in the North country have not been entirely satisfactory. Moreover, as with Central British Columbia, the agricultural settler in Northern Ontario has to face competition in the products he is best able to produce, from the low cost surplus-producing Prairie Region adjoining the province on the West -- as well as from the older settled parts of Ontario

(1) Mr. G. A. Hills, Dominion Land Surveyor, states that A grade land in Northern Ontario is about equivalent to C grade land in the Southern part of the province.

on the South. Besides, much of the better land occurs in long narrow strips on either side of the many rivers traversing the region from North to South. This adds to the difficulties and costs of settlement. Much research, experimentation, education and organization work remains to be done before the problems involved in the settlement of this area are solved, and its development will involve substantial further outlays by governing bodies.

(4) Local markets, however, are adequate to absorb greatly increased amounts of agricultural products from the local farm operators. In the Great Clay Belt, resident farmers are supplying only about one-fifth of the local urban requirements of farm produce despite the one-way freight advantage from outside points.

(5) In Ontario, the industrial processing of agricultural products is already further advanced than in the Canadian West. The writer has found nothing to suggest that prospective developments, either in these industries or in those using other classes of raw materials, are likely to be such as to induce any radical or rapid increase in the density of agricultural settlement.

Quebec

(1) Accurate information regarding land settlement possibilities in the province of Quebec is much more deficient than in Ontario. Practically none of the unused lands of the province have been covered by even reconnaissance survey. Early estimates placed the acreage available for agricultural settlement at an unduly high figure which has been progressively reduced as the bases of estimation have been subject to more rigid examination and additional information has been obtained concerning the areas in question. The most recent official estimate was made in 1943. In that year, the Deputy Minister of Colonization stated that there still remains in the province suitable unsettled land for about 100,000 new agricultural farm holdings or in the neighbourhood of 10,000,000 acres--or 12,000,000 at the outside.

If the findings of Mr. G. A. Hills in the Ontario section of the Clay Belt should be found on investigation to reflect conditions in the Quebec section (where most of the province's unused lands are located), further drastic downward revisions in the estimates may well be necessary. Indeed, available meteorological data indicate that a considerable portion of the 6,000,000 acres credited to the unorganized portion of Abitibi County is beyond the climatic margin of agricultural use.

Of course in Quebec, the criteria for judging the suitability of land for agricultural settlement are somewhat different from those in Ontario and the Canadian West, where lands are assessed with a view to their use for commercial agriculture. Subsistence agriculture prevails in the colonization areas of French Canada and farming is regarded more as a way of life than as a business enterprise.

Nevertheless, even after making allowance for differences in standards of suitability, there are grounds for suspecting that even the latest official figures on available agricultural acreage will be found to be as much as 25 to 30 percent too high. Perhaps a figure of 7,500,000 acres and 75,000 farm holdings might be accepted tentatively as a safer estimate of the agricultural settlement possibilities in this province.

(2) If to these figures one adds such ~~proportion~~ of the 5,321 idle or abandoned farms (535,000 acres) as are suitable for resettlement, and another 10,000 or more farms which will become available through the ageing of present operators, it is clear that Quebec has unused agricultural lands materially in excess of the prospective post-war demand of her own citizens for new farm holdings.

This circumstance must not be taken to mean that these surplus lands will be available for settlers from elsewhere. It is definitely the policy of the province to retain them for her own people. Under the present colonization policy their settlement will be spread over the next three or four decades.

(3) While new settlers in Northern Quebec encounter the same types of difficulty as those in Northern Ontario, the admirable settlement policy of the province of Quebec and the philosophy of the settlers themselves are

effective offsetting factors. Local urban markets are adequate to absorb all of the produce that a much larger farm population will have for sale. It is, therefore, reasonable to count on a progressive and orderly extension of colonization in this (and other areas within the province) after the war.

(4) What has been said about the probable effect of prospective industrial development on agricultural settlement in Ontario would seem to apply equally to the province of Quebec. The same is probably true concerning the possible extension of forest settlement with agriculture as a part-time subsidiary.

The Maritimes

(1) In the Maritimes as a whole, the trend in the number of farms and in occupied farm acreage has been downward for the past several decades, so that an extension of settlement would involve a reversal of a long established over-all trend. In New Brunswick, the most recent authoritative opinion places the maximum acreage that could be farmed at 30 per cent of the total area of the province or 5,300,000 acres, of which only a limited portion is really suitable farm land. Occupied acreage in 1941 was just under 4,000,000 acres. Opportunities for the extension of agricultural settlement in this province would thus appear to be relatively limited, although recent experience has shown that it is possible to promote successful settlement (on a part-time basis with forestry) in the four Northern counties. By and large, however, informed opinion favours using presently forested areas for forestry rather than agriculture. In New Brunswick and Nova Scotia combined, there are some 100,000 acres of marshland that might be reclaimed, but such land when reclaimed would not appreciably increase the number of farm operators in these provinces. It would rather improve the economic status of up-land farmers who would make use of the acreage to round out their farming operations. A review of the available evidence on Nova Scotia suggests that save for a possible moderate extension of part-time farming, no significant possibilities exist for the extension of agricultural settlement in that province either at the present time or in the immediate future. Such development as is likely to take place promises to be in the direction of the more intensive and effective use of present farm acreage with a resulting higher standard of life for its present occupants. The same applies to Prince Edward Island, where occupied agricultural land constitutes 94.5 percent of all potential farm land.

(2) That is not to say that much cannot be done through better farm practices, the securing of enlarged export markets, the encouragement of tourist trade, the reorganization and revival of the fishing industry, the increase in the number of processing plants for agricultural raw materials, etc., to increase agricultural production and improve the status of resident farm operators.

(3) Only in New Brunswick are usable farm lands available to meet the prospective demand for new farm holdings on the part of residents of the province, and it is more than probable that, as in the past, many young men will prefer unused lands in other parts of Canada, to those within their native province.

(4) Recent studies are by no means pessimistic concerning prospective industrial expansion in the Maritime section of Canada (1), but save for a possible stimulus to part-time farming through the reorganization of the fishing industry, such expansion as may be expected is not likely to be on a scale adequate to bring about any radical change in farm practices or provide any significant impetus to more intensive agricultural settlement.

(1) See for example, The Economic Effects of the War on the Maritime Provinces of Canada (publication of the Institute of Public Affairs, Dalhousie University) by B. S. Keirstead. See also, Submission of the Province of New Brunswick to the Special Committee on Reconstruction, Ottawa, December 2, 1943.

Canada as a Whole

The over-all picture for Canada as a whole thus suggests something between 27,000,000 and 29,000,000 acres of unused, reasonably accessible land which is regarded as physically suitable for agricultural settlement by experts in the provinces in which they are located (1). Included in both these totals are 10,000,000 acres in the province of Quebec, which, for reasons stated above, may well prove an over-estimate by 25 per cent or more, in which case the above over-all limits would be reduced to say 25,000,000 to 27,000,000 acres. Whatever its exact amount, provincial authorities in the province of Quebec hold the view that all unused agricultural land in the province will be required to provide farm holdings for the increase in local farm population expected during the next few decades.

Unused agricultural land in Canada outside Quebec is estimated at between 17,000,000 and 19,000,000 acres, which acreage, on the basis of land utilization practices in the regions in which it is located, might be expected to accommodate between 70,000 and 80,000 full-time agricultural settlers. Proposed irrigation projects in the Prairie Region, if and when completed, would provide for a further net increase of something over 13,000 farm units. The total potential increase is thus set at between 83,000 and 93,000. These are outside figures. Detailed investigation has yet to demonstrate the physical and economic feasibility of much of the proposed irrigation development.

Present operators on sub-marginal holdings are regarded by provincial authorities as having a preferred claim on unused agricultural lands. The number of operators in this category who should be moved to other locations is placed at 9,000 in Saskatchewan; in the absence of any authoritative estimate for Alberta, a figure of 3,000 is accepted as a reasonable guess, making a total of say 12,000. (2). How many will or can be moved is not known, but in the meantime, the provinces concerned feel that alternative holdings should be reserved in the unsettled districts within the provincial jurisdiction. Such being the case, a figure somewhere between 71,000 and 81,000 might be taken as more appropriately representing the number of new farm holdings, outside Quebec, potentially available for the extension of settlement after the war.

One gathers from provincial experts that the probable time required to properly develop this potential will be between ten and twenty years, assuming, of course, that it is economically feasible to proceed without interruption and in an orderly manner. In some provinces the development would probably be more rapid than in others.

In addition to full-time agricultural settlers, many foresters may be placed on small agricultural holdings in the vast forested areas across Canada as more effective ways of combining forestry and part-time farming are devised. The number may run to many thousands. There is scope also for the extension of part-time farming in combination with the fishing, mining and urban industries generally. Settlement opportunities likely to be offered by possible developments in these several fields cannot be assessed at the present time, yet they constitute an important part of the post-war picture.

In three important regions outside Quebec, viz., Northern Ontario, Northern Alberta and Central British Columbia, lands suitable for full-time agriculture are available in excess of the immediate prospective requirements of residents of the provinces in which they are situated. Their combined settlement potential is placed at something over 50,000 new farm families.

(1) Potential agricultural acreage in the Yukon and Northwest Territories is not included in these totals for reasons stated in the text.

(2) The removal of operators from sub-marginal lands in Northern Ontario was provided for in the over-all estimates employed above.

Out of this total, provision must be made for a limited number of demobilized members of the armed services, for whom farm holdings are not available elsewhere, as well as for some persons returning to agriculture from war industries. In addition, there will be the requirements of such of our surplus rural population as desire to settle in these districts as they are developed. No precise estimate of these total domestic requirements is possible, but if they were to amount to as much as half the total supply, there would still be accommodation for some 25,000 immigrant settlers. The actual figure may be appreciably higher--or somewhat lower. It cannot be determined in advance, but obviously there is a definite limit to the number of agricultural settlers Canada can accept from abroad.

Similarly, the increase of settlement that may occur through the more intensive utilization of lands already occupied cannot be determined with any degree of precision. Increased settlement, whether through the extension of agricultural acreage or its more intensive use, is conditioned ultimately by the demand for agricultural produce.

In this connection, the studies of Dr. McFarlane, Dr. Saunderson and Dean Kirk, which summarize all authoritative evidence concerning possible industrial uses of agricultural products, indicate that in view of the fact that plastics, alcohol and other important products can be made much more cheaply from raw materials of non-agricultural origin, no phenomenal increase in the industrial demand for agricultural products is to be expected in the post-war period. A gradual increase is assured, but it is definitely not likely to be on a scale sufficient to materially affect agricultural settlement possibilities. Moreover, such fragmentary evidence as the writer has been able to secure suggests that the same is likely to be true of our industrial development generally.

As to the possible increase in domestic demand through improved dietary standards, Dr. W. C. Hopper of the Economics Division, Dominion Department of Agriculture, finds that to raise the diet of every Canadian to the standard established by the Canadian Council on Nutrition would require an increase of about 2,000,000 acres to provide food for dairy cattle and the necessary additional fruits and vegetables (1). This is about equivalent to the acreage that would be freed if our annual exports of pork and bacon to Great Britain were reduced by two hundred and seventy-five million pounds. It is equivalent in amount to approximately 8 per cent of our estimated available unused agricultural lands. Clearly, any major impetus to agricultural settlement in the Dominion, if it is to come from improved nutritional standards, must come through increased export demand arising from improved dietary standards in other countries.

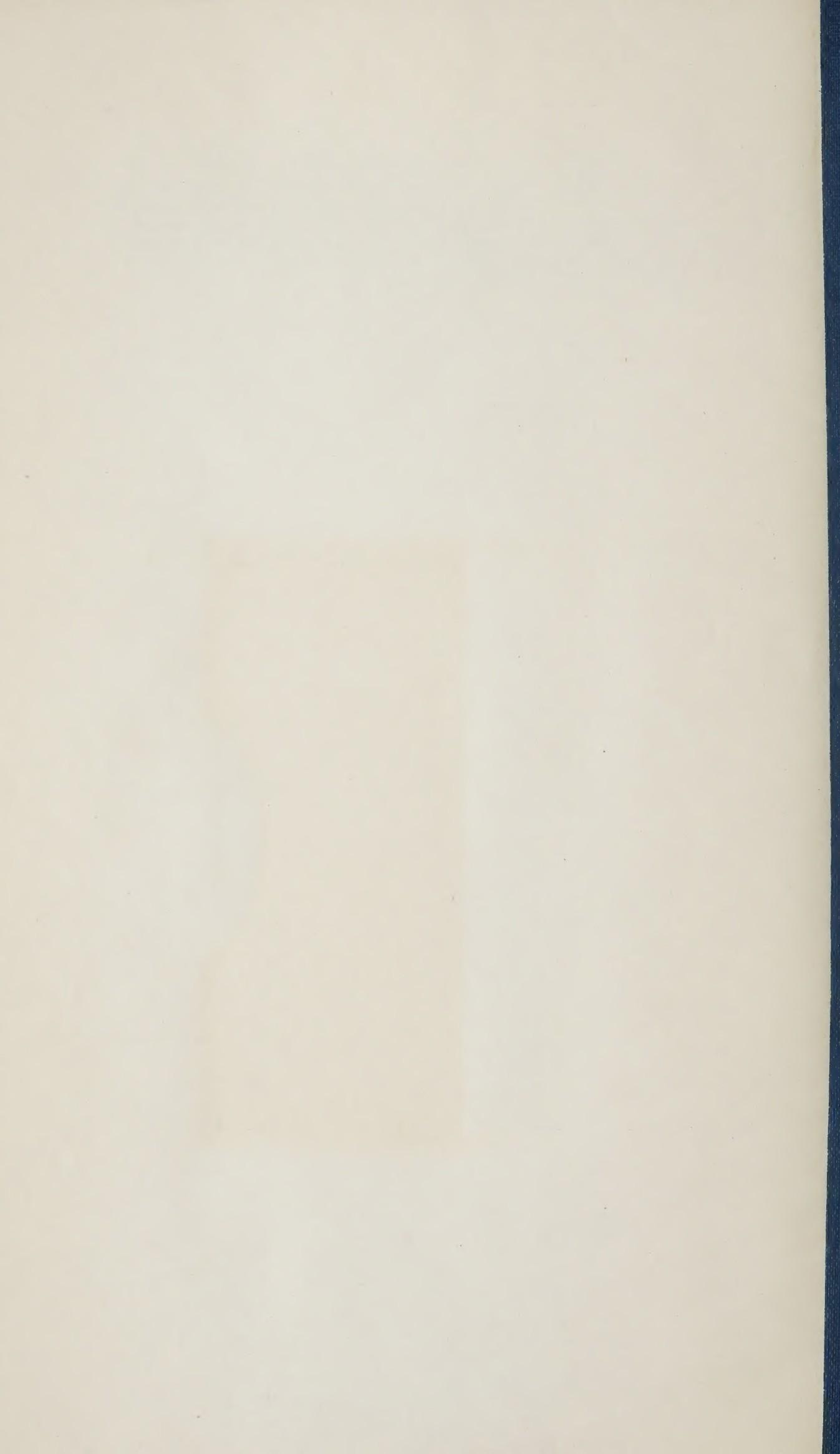
That is not to say that the supplying of adequate dietary requirements of our own population might not result in the employment of more labour on our farms. That will depend in large measure on the economies in labour effected by the new farm implements that have been specially designed for use on smaller farms after the war.

The above analysis and conclusions are based on the assumption that settlement programs (at least outside Quebec) will aim at the development of commercial rather than subsistence agriculture. Such is generally the intention, and for reasons that seem proper and adequate to provincial officials. It may be that subsistence farming could form a permanent part of the agricultural economy of English-speaking Canada just as wage differentials persist in the cities. There are arguments on both sides. The fact is, however, that that type of settlement is not regarded with favour by the provinces controlling most of the remaining unused agricultural acreage.

Finally, it must not be inferred from the emphasis placed on the physical and economic determinants of agricultural settlement, that the author

(1) Food Consumption in Canada in Post War Years with Special Reference to Nutritionally Adequate Diets by W. C. Hopper. Paper delivered at C.S.T.A. Convention, Toronto, June 28, 1944.

or the Committee responsible for the preparation of the present report holds the view that physical and economic factors should or will be the sole determinants of future settlement policy. Political and humanitarian considerations will bulk large in the post-war world and may not always conform with that which is economically desirable. Under such circumstances, compromise is inevitable--but such compromise as is within the limits set by physical and economic controls.



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